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How To Organize A Community Garden In Massachusetts

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This booklet is a draft for a more comprehensive guide to community garden program development. It's purpose is to promote community gardening activities in Massachusetts, give useful and practical information about starting and maintaining community gardening programs, help households find ways to cut costs while increasing nutritional value of the food they eat, and draw attention to the regional agricultural picture.

We solicit your comments, suggestions and criticisms. At the back of this booklet is a "feedback" sheet for you to fill out and return to us.

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COMMUNITY GARDEN PROGRAMS:

GETTING ORGANIZED

I. WHO STARTS COMMUNITY GARDENS?

Are your food costs getting too high? Are you (or do you know) a person who might enjoy gardening but has no land? Are you looking for ways to improve and help beautify your neighborhood or community? Are you a public official or community leader? Do you work with a social or human service organization?

If you can answer "yes" to any of these questions, then this booklet is for you. Community gardens are started by all types of people and each garden is a special and unique combination of people and resources. The reasons to have community gardens are becoming more important each year. One is that food prices continue to rise; gardening can save money on the grocery bill. Gardening is a great recreational activity for young and old alike. It provides fresher, better-tasting and more nutritious vegetables. It also is an exciting educational opportunity, to learn how to grow your favorite foods. Best of all, it's fun!

So whoever you are, you can start a community garden, or be part of one, or help support the efforts of those who are doing it. Plenty of community gardens are organized by neighborhood volunteers, someone who loves gardening, or who just thinks it is a good idea and wants to try it, or who wants to do something special in their neighborhood. Civic groups and social and human service agencies may want to organize gardening related projects for a specific clientele like youth and senior citizens.

If you are a town or public official you are in a special position to organize or help out community gardening efforts. In your position of leadership your decisions and actions now may affect the town's food resources later. First, take a look at your town, asking what is being done on a local level to strengthen the food resource base. In Massachusetts, many community gardens are organized and sponsored by a town office (Mayor's office, Parks Department, Conservation Commission, to name a few). If you are unable to start a garden project, then support the efforts of volunteers and others who are working on food and nutrition-related projects. Together you can adopt a cooperative and problem solving attitude that can help advance your ideas in the face of administrative inertia.

II. PLANNING

Starting a community garden in your town may be a relatively simple task or a huge undertaking, depending upon your community, its resources and its needs. Ask yourself what you are trying to do. What are your goals and the scope of the project? Do you just want a place for you and a few neighbors to grow a garden or do you wish to start a larger community garden project that is open to all? Are you sponsoring a program for a social service agency or a school or youth group? Is the garden to be one component of a much larger community food project that integrates existing agricultural resources and creates new ones? The answers to these questions help determine the complexity of the program and the amount of necessary time spent organizing. Adequate planning will help insure the success of the gardening program, no matter what the size.

Next, ask yourself what is the need for the type of program you envision? Who are the people who will garden there? Are there people who live in apartments or multiple family houses who need garden space? Nearly everyone needs a way to save on food costs by raising some of their own food. Will the garden contribute to neighborhood beautification or town recreational programs? Can it become a special resource for elderly, youth, handicapped or low-income people? This information may help justify your plan to certain town officials, or get permission to use land, or build local political support.

Third, assess the local resource potential. Inventory what you've got to work with initially. Are you one person with an idea or is there a group of interested people? Can you expect cooperation and any services from any municipal departments? Do you have a garden site in mind or is there plenty of good garden land to choose from? Net-working and utilizing local resources is essential, especially if funding might be a problem.

After assessing the situation, continue the planning process. There is no recipe for a successful garden project, no formula or rules that work for everyone. Each of the approximately 200 existing community gardens in Massachusetts is the unique result of local resources and talent. The ideas and models offered in this booklet are suggestions from successful aspects of programs, but obviously, different gardens require different amounts of planning and organization.

When planning a community garden program, it seems like everything has to be done at the same time. True, if its now early spring, and the garden is being started for this year. But if you are starting to plan now for next season, you have more lead time to plan and organize the program, find a garden site, investigate local resources and funding possibilities. Start as early as possible. A garden site can be located in fall or early winter and plowed so that the sod clumps have time to break down before land is plowed again in the spring.

How do you plan for a community garden program? It should include the following components:

-Finding a sponsor.
-Finding a coordinator.
-Locating resources and/or funding.
-Publicity.
-Building local support.
-Developing the garden site.
-Developing support services to the garden and the gardeners.
-Developing the internal structure of the garden project (rules, procedures...).

III. COORDINATOR

Every community garden needs an energetic coordinator willing to do the leg work necessary to bring the land and the gardeners together. Many coordinators are volunteers but some receive stipends, are CETA sponsored, or are salaried employees of a town office, social service agency, or corporation. The coordinator may be the same person who is organizing the community's garden program or may be in charge of one garden site out of several. The organization and coordination of a community garden may also be done by a small group of people, or the coordinator may delegate some of the organizational tasks to participating gardeners.

The coordinator does or delegates the following:

-Arranges for community garden sponsor.
-Finds a garden site.
-Arranges for water, fencing, plowing and any other group support services (bulk ordering...).
-Handles funding, budget, or garden plot fees, money.
-Publicizes the garden project and signs up the gardeners.
-Calls first meeting and subsequent gatherings of garden group.
-Organizes staking out garden plots and assignment of plots.
-Is the link/liaison between cooperating agencies and the gardeners.
-Provides leadership for the project through the gardening season.

The coordinator should be committed to working with the garden project until late fall, after the garden has been put to bed.

IV. SPONSOR

A sponsor is not absolutely essential but may help the community garden project to realize its potential as a civic or social service. Most Massachusetts community gardens have sponsors. A sponsor can often facilitate or provide some of the necessary support services and startup organization. It enhances the credibility of the project. A sponsor can find a coordinator as part of the project planning, or a coordinator may seek out a sponsor for a project. A group of people can create a sponsor by incorporating into a neighborhood garden group!

Who Sponsors Community Gardens in Mass?

Sponsor	One Example
Municipal Govt.	
Conservation Commission	-Reading
Dept. Parks & Rec.	-Holyoke
City Manager or Mayor's Office	-Lowell
Streets Dept.	-Newton
Public Facilities Dept.	-Boston (Revival prog.)
Board of Health	-Waltham
Public Library	-Medford
Youth Commission	-Natick
Engineering Dept.	-Medway
County Govt.	-Hampshire County Planning Dept. Northampton
State Govt.	-Ma. Div. of Agri. Land Use
Federal Government	-GSA Federal Records Center, Waltham
Community Action Programs	-Springfield
Corporations	-Ma. Elec. Co.
Community organizations	-South End Garden Project, Boston
Garden Clubs	-Weymouth
Civic organizations	-Jaycees in some towns
Churches	-St. Christines, Marshfield

V. FUNDING & SUPPORT SERVICES

Depending on community resources, funding may be totally unimportant or it could be THE major obstacle to garden startup. First thing to do is to figure out what you need, assess which support services and resources might be donated, and estimate upcoming costs. Costs might include some or all of the following: land rental, plowing or rototilling, water system installation, seasonal water bill, lime, manure, mulching materials, printing and publicity costs, salary or stipend for coordinator, hoses, fencing and tools. Keep accurate records of any incoming money, and what it was spent for. Most Massachusetts community gardening programs use a COMBINATION of sources:

Plot fees are one funding source for about half of Massachusetts' garden programs. The charge per family garden plot ranges from a few dollars to $15. Sudbury Community Gardens charges less for Senior Citizens. Brookline, Newton and other gardens charge more for larger or double plots. One way to determine plot fees is to estimate upcoming costs and divide that figure by the anticipated number of gardeners. Any leftover money can be used for site improvement, refunded at the end of the season, or forwarded to the following year. Be sure to collect plot fees at the beginning of gardening season, when gardeners sign up, or at an organizational meeting.

Municipal Appropriations and/or Support Services are provided to community gardens, especially those sponsored by City Hall. Money may be allocated to the community garden project directly in the

form of a grant or allocation, or by including the program in the budget of a department like the Youth Commission or the Parks/Recreation Department. In-kind donation of support services is far easier to arrange than direct municipal funding. The various municipal offices may provide or help obtain land, water services, plowing, a coordinator, fencing, barrels, a CETA position, clerical (especially gardener sign-up) and endorsement. Town offices that work most closely with some community gardens across the Commonwealth; Parks and Recreation Depts., Conservation Commissions, Public Works Depts., Youth Commissions, and mayors' or city managers' offices.

Donations of time, services, materials or money from business, individuals, or other non-profit groups can be a big help. Business will sometimes donate tools or fencing. The plowing or rototilling may be donated by local individuals. Gardeners themselves should plan to spend time helping to get things organized in the spring.

Fundraising Activities by the garden group itself can raise money if the group is well organized. Be creative!

Try a pot-luck supper at the start of the season, or a seedling sale. Or a film or speaker.

CFNP Funding: Available to community action agencies, the Community Food & Nutrition Program of the Community Services Administration provides start-up monies for food self-help programs for low-income people. North Shore Community Action Program and South Middlesex Opportunity Council are two of several Mass. CAPs that have received CFNP funding for various programs that include farmers markets, community gardens, outreach on food issues and community greenhouses. For more information, contact your local community Action Program, the regional CSA office in Boston, or the Division of Social & Economic Opportunity of the Mass. Dept. of Community Affairs. (See appendix for phone numbers and addresses of agencies).

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) from U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Federal money administered through City Hall that can be applied for by community groups for neighborhood improvements. Contact your local City Hall or Community Development office.

Urban Development Action Grants (UDAG) also available from HUD. Contact your local Housing office and Community Development offices.

CETA (Comprehensive Employment Training Act) provides salaries for public service employees sponsored by public agencies and non-profit groups. CETA positions have been utilized for several Massachusetts community gardens and other food/agriculture projects such as solar greenhouses, food co-ops, youth farming projects, canning centers, and farmers markets, contact the State Manpower Services Council (727-1916) for a copy of their booklet "CETA: Opportunities in Food and Agriculture." CETA programs include:

Title II - Public service employee positions.
Title VI - Special Projects.
Youth Conservation and Community Improvement Project (YCCIP).
Other Youth Employment and Training Programs (SPEDY).

For more information, contact your local CETA office or the Massachusetts Department of Manpower Development.

Commonwealth Service Corps (CSC) positions provide a stipend of about $17 per week for volunteers who are volunteering 30 or more hrs. weekly and who are not working for a salary elsewhere. There are a limited number of positions statewide. For more information, contact your local community action program, or in Boston, Citizens For Participation, Dept. of Community Affairs, 727-4075.

Private Foundations usually fund certain types of projects and thus requires some research to determine which of the thousands of foundations have an interest in agriculture/food projects. This information can be obtained by locating informed people who have written proposals for similar types of projects, or by consulting The Foundation Directory a standard reference work in most public or university libraries. If you have access to Boston, go to the Foundation Library located at the Associated Foundations of Greater Boston, 294 Washington Street. This is a New England regional resource center and a training session is a prerequisite to library use. SEE APPENDIX.

Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) and Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC) from the U.S. Park Service funds projects that employ and provide environmental training for youth. For more information contact the Mass. Department of Environmental Management, 727-3180.

Mass. Self-Help Program provides 80% of money for purchase of land that abutts existing open space or parks. For more information contact Mass. Division of Conservation Services, 727-1552.

Corporate Budgets for corporations (like Mass. Electric Company) include funding for their garden program under the budget category of public information, public relations, publicity or consumer relations.

Keep your eyes open for upcoming "neighborhood revitalization projects" monies from the federal government by staying in touch with your local city planner.

VI. BUILDING SUPPORT IN THE COMMUNITY

Once a successful community gardening program is established, community support is no problem. In the organizational stages, however, it is important to give attention to this aspect, in order to locate and maximize existing local resources, to encourage participation and to avoid

later conflicts. It is important to "talk-up" the gardening project, to enlist local enthusiasm and support so that it can happen in spite of any initial barriers like lack of funding, etc. Therefore, be prepared to present your case and justify your plan if necessary to landowners, public officials and townspeople. Be as clear as possible about the goals of the project and resource needs. For example, here are some REASONS why a community garden program might benefit your town or community:

- .Can help cut food costs, help fight inflationary food prices.
- .Recreation/Enjoyment/Fun for all ages.
- .Educational value; learn gardening skills, learn where food comes from.
- .Better nutrition; fresher and more nutritious vegetables.
- .Is a source of community pride and self-help.
- .Encourages cooperation of neighbors/townspeople.
- .Helps urban revitalization.
- .Strengthens local food resources.
- .Will provide garden space for people who have no land and could not otherwise garden.

Included in the organizational footwork of starting a community garden, then, is the necessity of letting the community at large know what is happening. This can be done through a combination of good publicity, a lot of talking, letters of explanation and written info, and written approvals or support letters (if necessary) from various offices and groups.

Enlist the support or approval (or at the least, keep informed) of local public officials, municipal offices and governmental agencies depending on their degree of influence and potential involvement:

- .Local Newspapers
- .Mayor's office, City Manager's office.
- .City Council, Selectmen, etc.
- .Parks and Recreation Dept., esp. Superintendent.
- .Conservation Commission.
- .County Extension Service.
- .Local Representative to the Mass. Legislature.

Also contact and talk with any local civic and community organizations and social service agencies that may be interested or supportive, including;

- .Neighborhood or community centers.
- .Garden Clubs.
- .Civic Organizations.
- .Youth Groups.
- .Council on Aging.
- .Local Community Action Program.
- .The neighbors surrounding the community site.

Encourage good publicity by writing and submitting press releases to local newspapers, and calling them to arrange interviews or cover any special events at the garden site. Local papers may appreciate receiving articles and pictures, and may well want to do a feature story on the garden project.

Be sure to document the activities of the garden group by keeping a notebook of newspaper clippings, informational materials, and pictures. This is a great way to introduce new people to the project and to help enlist subsequent support. It will help future new garden co-ordinators and may prove useful if the group applies for funding anywhere.

VII. FINDING AND ORGANIZING THE GARDENERS

Gardeners can be recruited any number of ways: announcements in local newspapers, knocking on doors and talking with neighborhood people, sending out flyers, placing leaflets in people's mailboxes, putting up posters in conspicuous places around town and at neighborhood centers and special service agencies. Either a designated person or office can take down the names of interested gardeners who phone in, or gardeners can apply by mail, or the initial publicity can invite all those who are interested to a specified public meeting. If the number of plots are limited, they should be assigned on a first come, first served basis. If more people sign up than is possible to garden at the site, a waiting list can be established in case someone drops out.

Establish a spirit of cooperation as soon as possible by making it clear that each gardener will have to chip in with her/his special talents to help make the whole community garden project work. If the project is fairly well organized already, gardeners can be asked to help out as they sign up. Otherwise, the organizational structure of the garden group can be decided and the various responsibilities and tasks can be divided up at the first meeting of the garden group. An agenda for the first meeting of the gardeners might look like this (add or delete items according to stage of organizing):

FIRST MEETING OF GARDEN GROUP : GARDEN PROGRAMS: GETTING ORGANIZED

1. Organizational structure of the garden group - committees? Officers? Who will do what?

2. Details about securing garden site. Permission?
3. Establishing or passing out rules and regulations. Filling out gardener applications/liability releases.
4. Site preparation:
   a. Plowing, rototilling or hand-digging?
   b. Water situation.
5. Garden lay-out.
   a. Plot size, # of plots?
   b. Decisions about lay-out, size of isles, etc.
   c. Do we want a community corn or potato patch (where each gardener gets a row or two)? Play area for children? Picnic area?
6. Funding and Money. Plot fees? Group buying and/or cost sharing for lime, manure, plow or rototill, water, tools, mulching materials, seeds, or rye seed (for winter cover crop)?
7. Educational resources. Where do we get gardening information, soil tested, technical assistance for beginner gardeners?

VIII. PAPERWORK

A bigger gardening project necessitates better organization and some amount of paperwork can streamline the process. Read through the following list of materials to see which is applicable to your community gardening program. Specific examples of the following are included in the Appendix at the back of this booklet.

1. Written permission for use of the garden site should be obtained from the landowner. This can be in the form of a letter, a written agreement, or a contract. It should list the length of the agreement (dates), what the land is to be used for, and any conditions specified by the land-owner. Try to get permission for multiple year use of the site, to insure long-range continuation of the project.

2. Liability release(s) can be used in lieu of insurance to protect the landowner. In some cases the co-ordinator can sign on behalf of the garden group. The most thorough approach is to have each gardener sign a liability release which can be either a separate document or included with the gardener application.

3. Gardener application form helps the coordinator keep a good record of who is in the garden group and can be a signed agreement by the gardener that (s)he will abide by the rules of the garden group.

4. Rules and regulations are best listed on paper so that each gardener has a clear idea of what the rules are. If things are clear beforehand, it may prevent troubles later.

5. Information packet for the gardeners can include the above (except for #1), plus helpful gardening information, other organizational information, gardening tips, recipes, etc. Information can be obtained from the local County Extension Service or from your own resource.

AT THE GARDEN

I. FINDING A GOOD SITE

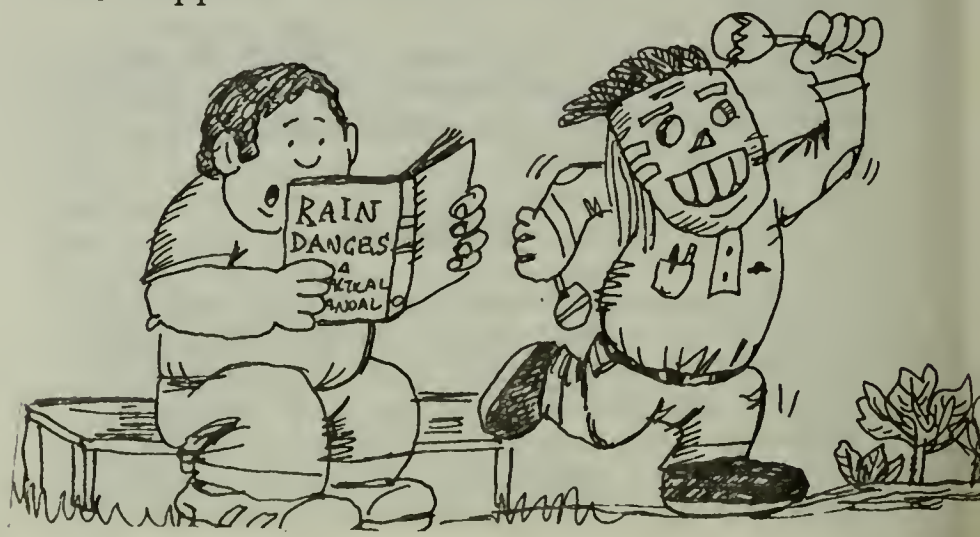
What is a good community garden site? Desirable characteristics are: relatively flat, 6 or more hours of sunlight per day, availability of water, accessibility to gardeners, and good soil. With these characteristics in mind, there are two avenues of approach to locating a good garden site. One is to contact the agencies that may have open or vacant public land under their control. These are the town's Conservation Commission, Parks and Recreation Dept., the local Redevelopment Authority,& Housing Authority. If state-owned agricultural land is nearby, contact the Division of Agricultural Land Use. The ownership of many vacant lots can be determined by contacting the municipal tax assessors office, where property is listed by street address. A second and often simultaneous approach is to undertake a search of your own for sites, and scout out good sites. Pinpoint several if possible (including potential public land sites), list them in order of desireability and contact the owners.

When negociating for permission to use the land from the owner or holding agency, be prepared if necessary to explain WHAT is a community garden, demonstrate the need in your community and in general sell the idea. It is important to get permission in writing with a letter or contract or agreement form. These are discussed in the "Paper-work" section of the first chapter, with examples in the appendix.

II. WATER

Plants need sunlight, nutrients, and water to grow. In many Massachusetts community gardens, including some that are not town-sponsored, the municipal water department or DPW has installed water lines and spigots to the garden sites. Town of Woburn installed a well at the garden. Gardeners can install a seasonal plastic pipe system from an adjacent building or fire hydrant, or hook up hoses. BE SURE TO GET PERMISSION. The City of Cambridge gives an abatement of the water bill of adjacent homeowners who provide water to some community gardens. Fire hydrants are used responsibly by community gardeners in at least six Massachusetts towns and several east coast cities.

If the above systems are out of the question, getting water to the garden becomes even more of a creative challenge. Is there a natural source nearby that can be tapped? If water looks to be a real



problem from day one, maybe best to look for another garden location. Gardens can be successful without water, but gardeners should be informed from the start that they will have to haul in any water they want. Gardeners should be supplied with information about drought tolerant crops and encouraged to use mulch. Bulk buying of mulch materials may be a good idea.

Who pays the water bill? Most often it is provided without charge to the gardeners by the town. In some cases the garden sponsor pays for the water. In cases where the gardeners pay for the water, the cost should be estimated and included in the plot fee.

III. SITE PREPARATION: PLAN AHEAD

You have a garden site and a group of gardeners...Now what? Time to prepare the site and turn over the plots to the gardeners. For a new garden site, the optimal time to do initial site preparation is in the fall. If possible, get the site plowed and harrowed or rototilled, and plant a winter cover crop like winter rye. If the site is plowed for the first time in the spring, the sod clumps don't have enough time to break up. Begin site preparation as early as possible in the spring after the ground has dried out to maximize the length of the season for the gardeners. However don't be discouraged by late starts: fall gardens can be started as late as August.

Plan now to keep the soil in good shape over the year. Building the soil, i.e. improving the way it looks, smells, and feels (and grows consistently good crops) should always be in progress. Results can be seen almost immediately and can improve significantly over the course of several years. Mulching, liming, manuring, applying compost, greenmanuring and cover cropping are all means of accomplishing soil improvement.

IV. TEST THE SOIL

Contact the County Extension Service for information and have the soil tested for pH, and Nitrogen, Phosphorous and Potash (N-P-K). Explain that vegetables will be grown on the site. Test for lead if the site is in a city, close to houses, or on a site where buildings once stood.

Soil testing should ideally be done as soon as the soil thaws so that the recommended additions of lime and fertilizer can have a few weeks to react with the soil before planting. At the very least do it as soon as you have the garden site in your hands.

Once the soil test results are back (about 3 weeks after sending them in) you'll probably find that you're advised to apply "x" pounds of ground limestone per 100 square feet. For a beginning community garden use hydrated lime at ½ the rate of ground limestone. Hydrated lime will work much quicker. Liming is well suited for group buying since not much is needed per garden and all gardens will need about the same.

The fertilizer recommendations should be posted for all to see. Let individuals provide their own fertilizer. Manure of some sort can often be purchased in bulk by the group.

V. TURNING THE SOIL

Decide how the soil will be turned over and prepared in the spring. This is the most common stumbling block for community gardens, but shouldn't pose much of a problem if decided upon early. There are several options, each with its good points:

Plow and Harrow. In less urban areas you may be able to hire someone (or find a donor) to plow and harrow the site with a tractor. This shouldn't cost more than a few dollars per garden plot, and is the best method for getting rid of grass sod or large perennial weeds. Be sure to ask for a nice neat job. A poor plowing job can be pure drudgery to work with.

Roto-Tilling. A small community garden (10-15 plots) can hire or rent a rototiller to till the entire site. A larger project is almost always restricted to having the plots done on an individual basis. It will help to have a list of people that are available to till for a fee.

A strong advantage to rototilling is that on garden sites with at least one season under their belt, the gardeners can keep their old plots and thus gain from the soil building and weed control they did the previous year. This is especially important if there are gardeners of widely varied philosophies and commitment. Rototillers do not shift the entire field around as a plow does, and they can do their work even when some gardens are already planted. Rototilling is a good method if there is the possibility of having unused garden plots since the plots can be left with last fall's cover crop to control weeds.

The main disadvantage of rototilling are the overall expense and the poor control of stout perennial weeds (which may form a new plant from every piece of chopped up root!). Rototilling services generally charge about $15 per hour with a $15 minimum. Group rental for a do-it-yourself job ought to be cheaper. The price of rototilling is still well worth the results, especially considering the value of the food that can come from the garden.

Hand Turning with a Spade. For a twenty by twenty foot plot there is absolutely no reason why a reasonably healthy active person can't turn the soil over with a spade. People do much larger areas than that by hand without much hardship. Give yourself ½ day in the garden with your spade, rake, manure and lime and you should be able to do an excellent job. Don't be lazy! This is the most inexpensive method by far and is tops for being gasoline efficient.

VI. LAY OUT THE PLOTS

A good size for a family garden plot is 20 X 20. In urban areas the plots may be smaller due to the lack of available gardening space and the large number of would-be gardeners (Cambridge has 10 X 10s) Gardeners at a larger and/or less urban site may wish to lay out larger size plots. Some community gardens have plots as large as 20 X 20. Some community gardens assign double plots to large households or energetic greenthumbs. The decision about plot size can be made by the coordinator or by the group at the first gardening meeting, based on the size of the site and the number of interested gardeners.

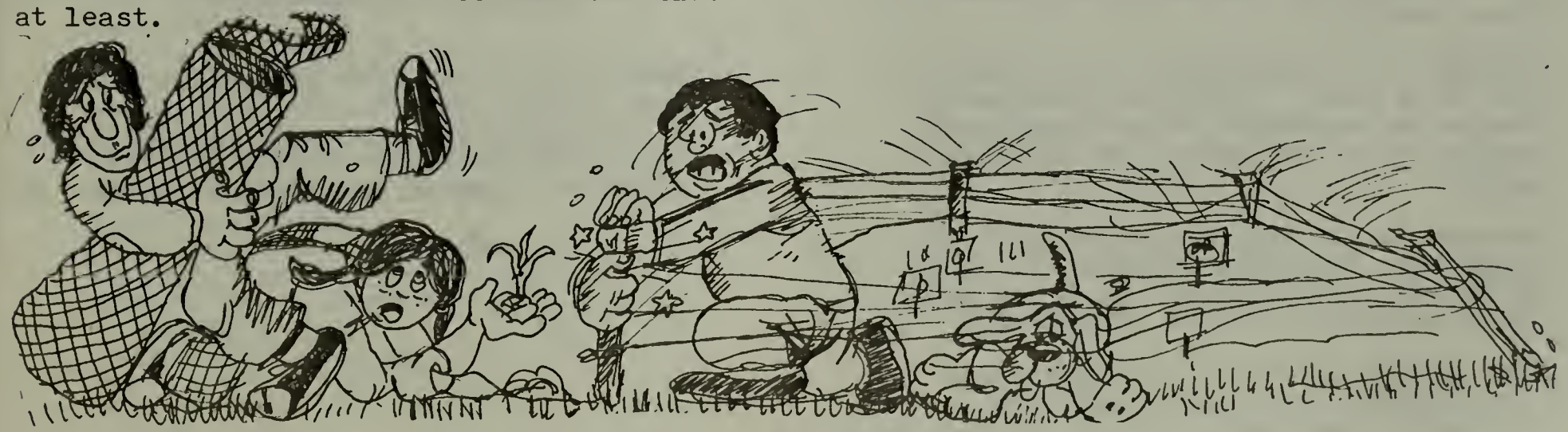
PLOT LAYOUT or staking out the plots is best done by a small group of gardeners. When planning both plot size and layout, allow for sufficient aisles and walking space so people do not have to step on each other's gardens and the walkways are clearly marked. Two to three feet is the minimum width for walkways. Each garden need not be surrounded by an aisle but should have clear access from one side at least.

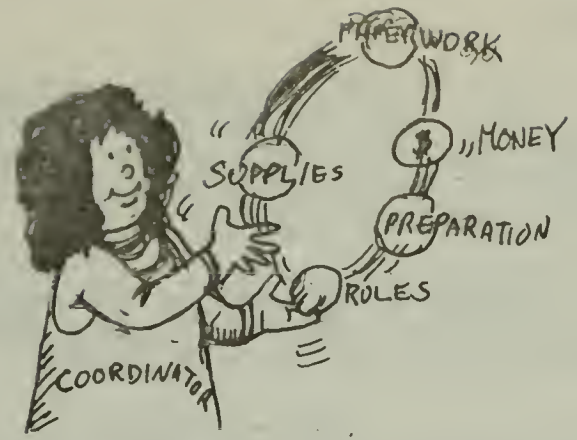
Plots can be laid out with stakes in each corner and string to mark the edges. A stake with the plot number placed in the middle of the plot will help new gardeners find the right plot.

Certain areas may be set aside for picknicking or childrens play and/or a community corn or potato patch!

VII. FENCING

Fencing is necessary in both rural and urban areas to keep out vandals--both human and animal. First check to see if the city or town will fence the land as part of regular maintenance of public land. If not, then try to get some fence donated or sold to your garden at a discount. In large community gardens like Newton's "Garden City Vegetable Kingdom", gardeners supply their own fencing (usually chicken wire and posts) for each plot to keep out rabbits and other pests. Most urban community gardens have fences; many suburban and rural gardens have none and/or allow gardeners to fence their own plots.





I. IF YOU ARE TAKING OVER THE POSITION OF COORDINATOR

If you are a new coordinator for an existing garden, you are spared the footwork of locating a garden site. A new coordinator with fresh energy can be an exciting event in the history of a community garden project, a chance to try out new ideas and change the things that weren't working out. Ideally, the previous coordinator will fill you in on the necessary organizational footwork and provide you with a list of the last year's gardeners.

Information you need and things to think about...

-Garden site permission: is it secure for this year? Is there a contract, lease, or agreement to be negociated and/or signed on behalf of the garden group?

-Paperwork: Do you have rules and regulations, liability release forms, or gardener applications? Do these need to be drafted, revised or updated?

-The garden site: is there water and fencing? (Can the water delivery system be improved? Does it need to be hooked up and/or repaired? Has the soil been tested this year?)

-Site preparation: how was it done last year and is that the best way for this year? Plow and harrow, roto-till, or hand dig the garden plots? Plots to be laid out the same way?

-Long term soil management: are gardeners knowledgeable about and using soil improvement methods like liming, mulching, manuring, cover cropping, and composting? Do they need more information? Can these soil amendments be bulk ordered by the group?

-The gardeners: Is there a list of last year's gardeners? Do gardeners want to keep their same plots? Should you advertise for more gardeners? When will the first garden meeting be?

-Garden supplies and information: do gardeners share tools? Should the group bulk order any supplies (lime, etc.)? Free or low cost seeds available? Where to get gardening information?

-Money: are there plot fees? Do these need to be changed? Are they collected as the gardeners sign up? Are there local resources that could be better utilized (donated materials or services)?

COORDINATORS CALENDAR

Early Spring: Late Feb., March, April

- Arrange garden site.
- Arrange sponsor
- Arrange water
- Publicize and find gardeners
- 1st. meeting-organize the group
- Arrange fencing
- Arrange to have site plowed or filled as soon as ground dries
- Buy seeds or get free ones

Late Spring: May, early June

- Plow or rototill
- Gardener organizational meeting
- Stake out plots
- Assign plots to gardeners
- Collect plot fees
- Plant gardens
- Workshops

Summer: Late June, July, Aug.,Early Sept.

- Re-assign neglected plots
- Plant succession crops
- Weed and Mulch
- Pest-control advice to gardens
- Harvest
- Pot lucks at the garden site
- Garden Fair or Event

Fall: Sept., Oct., Early November

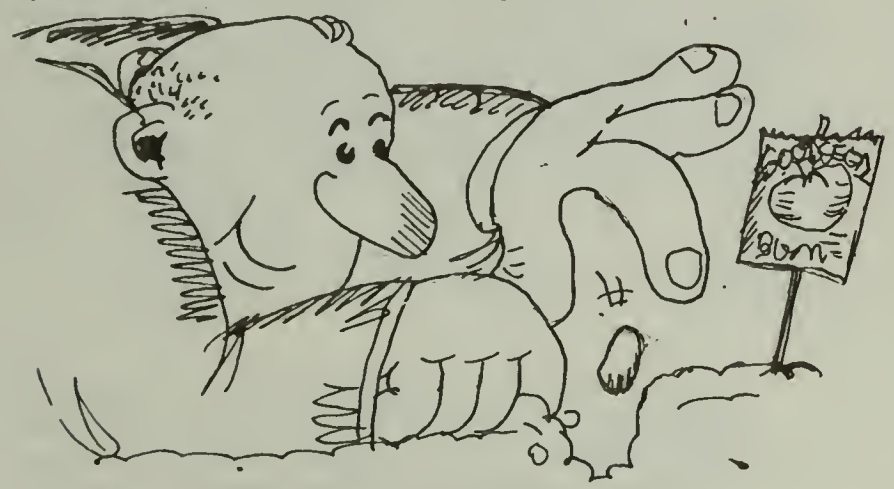
- Harvest
- Garden Cleanup Activities
- Plant cover crop
- Cover crop info to gardeners
- Plow site if new garden site
- Locate garden site for next year's garden if new
- Garden Fair or Event

Winter: Late November, Dec., Jan., Early February

- Evaluation of last year's garden project
- Start planning for next year
- Order seeds
- Mid-winter get together/slide show

II. PLANTING THE GARDEN

Gardeners (especially 1st year) may need gardening information and/or technical assistance. Beginning gardeners may not know how to prepare the soil, plant the seeds, or thin the seedlings, or when to water. Free or low-cost "how-to" garden booklets are available at the County Extension Service offices. Some Extension offices have staff that give gardening lectures or on-site gardening demonstrations, or you may be able to find a local "greenthumb" gardening expert to give a "how to plant" workshop for gardeners. Including an educational component may be essential to the success of the community garden project.



III. ACTIVITIES THROUGH THE GROWING SEASON

Maintaining the garden; weeds and bugs can get out of hand in July and August and can be especially discouraging to inexperienced gardeners. Encourage gardeners to keep up with weeding. Mulches like black plastic, newspaper, salt marsh hay, spoiled hay, grass clippings, or old sawdust really do help prevent weed growth.

If weeds start to get out of hand, here are some suggestions:

-Have a weeding party of all the gardeners and friends,

-Get a youth group to give you a hand (boy scout troup, CETA youth project).

-Some community gardens have a salaried employee who works at the site planting flowers, keeping the aisles weed-free, helping gardeners, etc.

-Mulch the aisles with wood chips, sawdust...whatever.

Some words about pest control... To avoid problems, best to discuss this issue BEFORE the bugs invade. With so many families gardening in one area, insecticide being sprayed in one plot may drift into the next plot, contaminating crops that are due to be harvested that day. Some gardeners may wish to use only organic techniques (nonchemical fertilizer & insecticides from natural sources). The gardeners may need information and technical assistance regarding pest control, and some agreement should be reached about usage. Some suggestions:

-Put all the organic gardeners in one section of the community garden.

-Agreement among gardeners to not spray on windy days.

-Information to gardeners about what are the local bug pests and what are the least toxic methods of control (get this information from a local farmer, expert gardener, or County Extension Service).

Periodic meetings or group activities are a great way to facilitate communication and head off potential problems. Some gardens have a once or twice a month pot luck supper or picnic at the garden site. The focus of a monthly get-together might be educational, with a demonstration or activity about some timely gardening topic like building cold frames, starting seedlings, how to plant, pest control, building a compost pile, mulching, nutrition information, putting the garden to bed. Information about nutrition, recipes, vegetable storage, canning, drying and freezing vegetables is welcomed by gardeners throughout the season. Contests and/or fairs can be part of the gardening fun, with prizes for the nicest garden, the "biggest" tomato or squash and the most unusual vegetable.

If space permits, be sure to have a shady picnic area at the garden site. Some gardens have benches or chairs. Other shared space might include a tool shed and/or a play area for children. A bulletin board helps for posting announcements, gardening information, etc.

Every community garden needs a compost pile. Finished compost is free organic fertilizer and a great soil builder. With so many techniques and styles of compost-making, a few gardeners may wish to form a "compost committee" and set up a composting system for the entire garden. Information about composting is available from the County Extension Service and in many vegetable gardening books.

Good publicity throughout the summer about gardening activities will help build community support for the project. Contact local newspapers to do a feature article on the community garden, invite friendly press representative to special activities, or write your own periodic press releases.

IV. FALL CLEAN-UP

This is every bit as important as spring start-up activities. Fall cleanup activities should include soil preparation for next year by the addition of organic matter and the entire garden should be seeded with a cover crop such as winter rye. Planting winter rye improves the look of the site, cuts down on soil erosion and weeds, and when turned under in the spring provides free fertilizer. Each gardener can sow winter rye in his/her own plot or the whole community garden can be seeded at once. Gardeners can agree on a date by which the gardens should be emptied and cleaned (depends on whose land is being used, the average date of first frost and what crops are being grown). Or a fall clean-up day can be scheduled for the entire group. Neglected plots should be cleaned up by a volunteer crew if the original gardeners cannot be located.

Autumn is a great time to start a compost bin with the weeds and plants that are coming out of the garden. Also a good time to add any organic material you can get hold of (like manure, or leaves).. Put some in the compost pile and dig the rest into the garden before planting the cover crop.

Garden Cleanup Procedure:

a) Empty the garden after the last crops are harvested or after the first frost. All weeds and plants can be piled to make compost. Stakes, poles and fencing should be stored for next year. Non-compostable waste (plastic, paper, containers, diseased plant material, trash) should be collected and hauled away from the site.

b) Add organic material, lime (if needed) and fertilizer. Turn it all under by harrowing, rototilling, or spading until it looks roughly like you are ready to plant the garden.

c) Plant winter rye grass or some other cover crop by sprinkling it evenly over the surface of the garden. Rake the seed lightly into the dirt to keep birds from getting it. Step b can be skipped IF gardeners are in a real pinch for time and/or energy, that is to say, it's better to plant the cover crop on the existing soil rather than give up the whole project because it seems like too much work.

d) NEXT SPRING turn the rye grass under by hand or machine for improved garden soil and "free" fertilizer.

V. THROUGH THE YEARS

Community gardens are a permanent and important part of the managed open space of every neighborhood, community or town. Gardens like Boston's Fenway Victory Gardens have existed continuously for decades. As fuel prices go up, local food resources (such as a community garden) become increasingly important. With the long range in mind, give some thought to the following:

-A permanent site; does the garden have long range permission? If not, and if the site is a good one, start now. Insure the continuation of the community garden.

-Plant perennials: Is there room for a common strawberry, rhubarb, or asparagus patch, or can these be planted by each gardener? Perennial flowers are a beautiful addition to any garden.

-Long range land management: Building the soil should be a continual concern. Results can be seen almost immediately and can improve significantly over the course of several years. Mulching, liming, manuring, applying compost and cover cropping are all means of accomplishing soil improvement.

-Gardener education about the above and other good gardening practices should be a priority.

-Tie in with other local food system re-resources and create new ones;
Are there canning centers or workshops to put-up vegetables for year-round food supplies?

-Are gardeners raising their own seedlings in coldframes or is there community greenhouse space available. Would a community cannery benefit your community?

VI. PROBLEMS AT THE GARDEN: TROUBLE-SHOOTING

Thievery and/or Vandalism are a problem in most community gardens. Unfortunate but true. Most garden groups do manage to cope with it in some way, but it is disheartening and a couple of gardens have shut down as a result in the past few years. Thievery is the stealing of vegetables, whereas vandalism is the wanton destruction of plants or property at the garden. Some suggestions from other community gardeners:

-Locate the garden within sight of houses and involve those neighbors in the garden project so they will watch out for it.

-Kids. Some folks say involve them in the garden project. Others say that the neighborhood kids whose parents are not gardening are the source of the problem and need to be dealt with strictly. Check out the youth in your community. Most community gardens welcome children when supervised by an adult, and many have sections set aside for youth groups.

-Fencing may help. Some gardens have locked gates.

-Participation and patrol. The more time that is spent at the garden by participants, the less time there will be for vandals. Ask local police to include the site in their routine patrol. Some gardeners patrol also if there is a known problem.

-Plant inconspicuous and less-known crops like ruby lettuce, kale, collards, root crops, okra. Avoid large free-standing crops like corn and staked tomatoes-let the tomatoes sprawl. Use some crops and weeds to hide other crops.

Abandoned and Neglected Garden Plots are a frustration for many garden coordinators. Some gardeners have good intentions when they sign up but lose interest or are unable to follow through for various reasons. Some ways to avoid the problem:

-When gardenerssign up, make it clear that a weekly time commitment of about 3 hours is necessary.

-First time or inexperienced gardeners need technical assistance to prevent discouraging crop failures. If a gardener plants the seeds too deep and they don't come up, the gardener gets discouraged and loses interest in plot. Avoid this by making sure there is a strong educational component to the garden program, either through demonstration of gardening techniques or maybe a buddy-system, where experienced gardeners work with less experienced gardeners.

-Include a clause in the rules and regulations that if gardening activity has not started at the plot by a specified date (June 1 or 15?), the plot will be reassigned to someone else. If there is no waiting list, some ambitious gardener may want a second plot.

Lack of Water at the Garden Site can be a hardship for gardeners who are hauling it from home, and plants won't grow without it.

-Avoid this problem initially by choos-

ing a garden site that has a potential water source, and set up the system in advance. If water is unavailable at the present site, could the garden be moved to a better location?

-Explore every possible means of getting water to the garden. The possibilities include using a nearby house or building, tapping into an existing water line, using a hydrant, filling barrels from an outside source or with collected rain-water, using a nearby natural source or digging a well.

-If a water source is out of the question, advise the gardeners to plant drought-resistent crops and use mulch.

-Keep the water system well maintenanced and repaired. Some money should be set aside from plot fees or funding to cover any problems. Does the system need to be drained or turned off at the end of the gardening season?

Plot Allocation Decisions can be a nuisance and cause resentment between the gardeners if not handled well. What if some of the plots are in the shade, or a gardener asks for two plots next year, or if someone wants to take over a plot that is abandoned?

-Have a fair and consistent procedure set up in advance to handle these situations. The coordinator can avoid awkward authoritarian role by insuring that the garden group decides upon the procedure at an early organizational meeting.

-Most community gardens assign plots on a first come, first served basis, with returning gardeners getting the same plot year after year. This encourages long-range commitment, soil management and planting perennials. If space is limited or the garden has a waiting list, the rules about abandoned plots and double plots will necessarily be stricter. Some gardens decide plot size by the size of the household.

-Gardeners with shady plots can plant shade-tolerant crops like lettuce and cucumbers until they can be reassigned to a sunnier location.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMMUNITY GARDENS

I. CORPORATE SPONSORED GARDEN

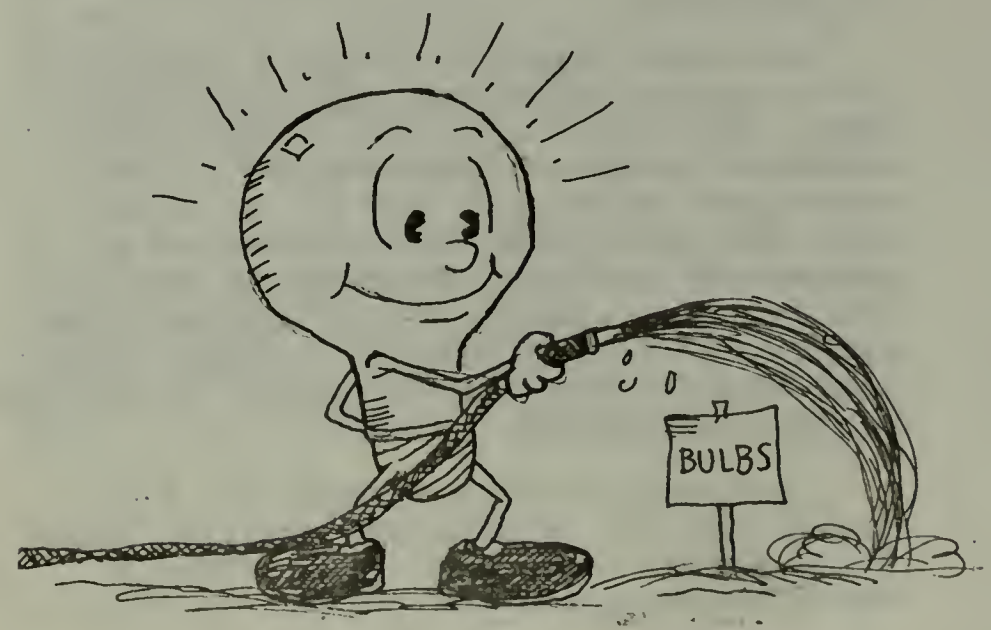
Mass. Electric Co.
"Grow a Garden on Us"

Building community relations through community gardens is the idea behind Ma. Electric Company's "Grow a Garden on Us" program. Since 1976, they have made land available in eighteen locations statewide, giving upwards of 1500 residents the opportunity to grow their own fresh food.

In addition to land, this unique gardening program provides (free of charge) Spring plowing and harrowing, a local garden coordinator, a water supply, and guidance on planting, growing, and preserving food. Many of the gardens are also harrowed in the Fall and planted to Winter rye. Each gardener is responsible for his or her own seeds, fertilizer, and tools.

Predictably, response to this program has been excelled, the demand often so high that there are long waiting lists for garden space. The gardeners themselves come from all walks of life, ranging in age from nine to ninety, and in income from poverty level to upper middle class. There are singles, widowers, retirees, and entire families coming together at all hours of the day. For many of them, working the earth has produced not only vegetables, but friendships that foster quickly through this shared experience. The community rapport is solidified by sponsored activities such as contests, and unsponsored activities like vegetable swapping at harvest time.

In 1977, the Governor recognized Ma. Electric's garden program with an "Environmental Awareness" award for improving community environmental standards. By making their unused land available for gardens, the Ma. Electric Company has provided residents with not only the opportunity to save money by growing their own fresh food, but with an outlet for community recreation, creativity, and harmony.



II. GARDENERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Association for the Support of Human Services, Westfield

Making the rewards of gardening accessible to the handicapped is a high priority issue with the Association for the Support of Human Services in Westfield. As a private non-profit organization, they manage three garden sites within the city, providing more than 150 plots for individual gardens. Preference is given to elderly, handicapped, and low-income applicants.

The gardens are plowed and harrowed in the Spring, a water supply is rigged up, and seeds are obtained from the Department of Community Affairs. In addition, at least one garden attendant is present at each site throughout the growing season to assist anyone needing help. This year the Association is starting tomato sets in advance, to be distributed to gardeners.

A unique feature of these gardens is their accessibility to handicapped persons. All three sites are within easy access of people in wheelchairs or with restricted mobility. One of the sites even has raised seed beds separated by extra-wide aisles to accommodate gardeners in wheelchairs and give them additional proximity to their plants. Several compost barrels have been provided for the use of the handicapped, as well.

Response to this program has been great, and the gardens are usually filled to capacity. Each year these elderly and disabled gardeners produce an overabundance of food, the surplus being absorbed by the Association into its emergency food bank. One of their present goals is to establish a program of food preservation and canning so that they can instruct more gardeners in utilizing the fruits of their labor.

Westside House, Worcester

Westside House, a community Mental Health agency has operated a group garden on state land at the Worcester Medical School. Residents of Westside House have developed a thriving garden that provides a supply of food for residents to learn to prepare in the kitchen. The success of this story is the wonderful cooperation gardeners have received from people in the Worcester area. Businesses such as the Worcester County Institute for Savings have sponsored van drivers to take participants to the garden site. Other volunteers have assisted by rototilling the area in the Spring.

III. GARDENING WITH YOUTH

GREENPOWER FARM in Weston started in 1970 with a group of about 50 people who donated money and machinery to the project. The first year, they worked a small number of family plots of 30' by 30' rented at $15/year to residents. In exchange for rent, the farm provided a good water supply and prepared the land for planting.

Showing steady progress, there are now 20 acres being farmed by youths from DARE, Inc. and Suffolk County 4H Clubs and by Community people. Originally excess produce went to the city to be sold. Now, 10% is sold at a local farm stand, 45% is sold in the city through ABCD, and 45% is harvested by urban dwellers and brought into the city by them.

Initially, Greenpower had only 1½ acres farmed organically, but they have been steadily expanding this program. They use as much compost as they can create, till as deep as they can, and avoid the use of machines which compact the earth.

DRUMLIN FARM in Lincoln was bequethed to Mass. Audubon in 1955. This 180 acre operation is run by paid staff of ten including teachers, administrators, a farmer and his assistant, and volunteers. They produce vegetables and cheese to be sold to the public and hay to feed their livestock. The use of chemical fertilizer is minimal and becoming less and less each year.

The staff offers school tours of the farm, and puts on a Harvest Day Festival annually in early October to help finance its expenses. They are also thinking of running workshops on such topics as the efficient use of animal power and butter-making.

The NATICK YOUTH COMMISSION FARM in South Natick is entering its fifth season as an operation geared entirely towards kids. Established on twenty-seven acres of School Department property, it is staffed by two adults and a CETA crew that totals 30-40 teenagers each year. The farm practices organic methods and incorporates as much alternative technology as possible. Last year a solar greenhouse was built with CETA help. They are presently investigating the possibilities of obtaining solar hot water panels for both the greenhouse and their dairy operation, as well as the possibility of constructing a wind power demonstration to generate more of their own electricity.

The farm prides itself on its close integration with the public school system. Workshops are held there to prepare teachers so that four to five hundred school children may visit the farm each year in conjunction with in-school programs. During the school year CETA teenagers work up to twenty hours each week on the farm, and some of the money generated in the sales of maple syrup and crops at farmer's markets and roadside stands is returned to them via profit-sharing.

The present directors have a full roster of exciting plans for expansion. In addition to maintaining the existing livestock, gardens, sugaring operation, orchards, and vineyard, they have plans for programs of pasture development, woodlot and timber management, aquaculture, the addition of beefalo, and a community nursery geared towards providing fruit and nut trees to steer the suburban landscape into one of food production. Plans are also underway for the development of community demonstration projects and outreach programs to help finance their operation.

THE BROCKTON CETA YOUTH FARM

The Bridgewater Farm success story is one of cooperation. An M.C.I. crew plowed and harrowed five acres of the land that had not been tilled for eight years. Tents were procured from the General Services Administration at Westover Air Base in Chicopee, Massachusetts. The Brockton National Guard Unit provided tent poles and ropes, a truck was borrowed from Yarmouth CETA and later two pumps for irrigation of selected crops were provided by Brockton Civil Defense.

To enhance the youth aspect of the program, the 50 youths on the project who were bussed to and from the site received daily lunches prepared by other youths involved in Self Help's summer lunch program. In June, the initial planting was done by a supervisory crew and then the youths took over under the direction and tutelage of Bob Diehl.

The youngsters were divided into five groups, each with a college leader and adult supervisor. Each crew farmed an acre of land using different agricultural procedures. This allowed for controlled experimentation by comparison.

In addition to their on-the-job farming experience, there were educational Career Exploration trips. The youths visited dairy farms in Bridgewater and Whitman. They learned how cranberries, a prime crop of the region, were grown and harvested on a trip to Cranberry World in Plymouth. They entered the world of experimental agriculture with field trips to the New Alchemy Institute in Falmouth and the Waltham Field Station. Helping out educationally with materials were the Plymouth County Extension Service and the State Department of Agriculture.

The results were "fantastic"! When the grand totals were added up, the five acres of land containing over 30 varieties of vegetables, flowers, gourds, pumpkins and ornamental Indian corn had yielded over 600 bushels of produce.

As provided for in the project proposal, the youths took home fresh vegetables daily to their needy families. In September and October, 509 certified welfare recipients received fresh vegetables from the Bridgewater Farm Project at the Brockton Regional Welfare Office.

In late September, fresh cut flowers were delivered to two local private nonprofit nursing homes to the delight of patients and employees.

Twenty-three schools within the 10 town consortium received 67 bushels of gourds, 261 pumpkins and 17 bushels of ornamental Indian corn in October. These were used in the classrooms as decorations and still life art work. In addition, the Self Help Head Start Program received 35 pumpkins.

In September, Brockton CETA farm participants who had worked towards and received 4-H awards entered competition at the Massachusetts Cranberry Festival at Edaville in Carver. They walked off with 71 ribbons including "Best of Show". Twenty-three of the ribbons were blue. In October, at the Brockton Fall Fair, CETA farm youths again took the "Best of Show" award along with a dozen first place blue ribbons.

The project fully achieved its goal of a learning experience for inner-city youths and as a controlled agricultural experiment. The farm provided fresh produce for the needy and aesthetic relief for local schools and institutions. The program touched not only 50 city youths at a rural farm site but literally hundreds of residents within the Brockton Manpower Consortium.

IV GARDENING ON STATE LAND

Fernald State School in Waltham has several unique types of gardens on its land. The land for two of the gardens is made available through the Ma. Div. of Agricultural Land Use. A 20-plot community garden for residents of Waltham and surrounding communities is tended by gardeners who specialize in organic gardening techniques. Another plot of land is used by the 4,000 member Cambridge Food Coop for a truck garden that not only provides a source of fresh produce for the coop, but is an educational program for coop members. In 1977 the coop garden produced some 1900 lbs. of fresh produce that were enjoyed by coop members.

Fernald's Occupational Training staff runs a 4-yr. old horticulture therapy and training program for the retarded residents of Fernald. Utilizing a greenhouse and heated coldframes, they raise annuals for the grounds of Fernald and nearby Metropolitan State hospital, and also grow and sell seedlings and houseplants. Additionally, some Fernald residents tend garden plots beside the buildings they live in. This year a new feature is being added to the program. Community garden plots will be opened near the greenhouse for aspiring local gardeners, to provide increased contact between Fernald residents and the community-at-large.

V. EMPLOYEE GARDENS

For the last four years, gardening has been a popular lunch hour activity at Addison-Wesley Publishing Company in Reading. Located in a suburban area on Route 128, the company decided to make productive use of the surrounding land by plowing it up for garden space. Each year the company takes responsibility for all of the preliminary preparations and divides the area into thirty-six plots that are claimed by employees via a sign-up in the cafeteria.

The program has been extremely successful, and the demand for garden plots grows larger every year. Most of the plots are held by individuals, but some are shared by several employees so that more than three dozen people are involved at any one time. The most popular time for gardening is at noon, but many who live in the vicinity prefer to work their plots later in the day.

Not only does a company garden provide employees without yard space at home an opportunity to grow their own vegetables, but it provides a meaningful work break activity as well. What better way to take out the tensions of the day than in the sunwarmed earth? As dirt under the nails becomes a common band, gardens become the basis for informal exchange of advice and small talk among employees. The sense of community between them is strengthened by their sharing common ground.

VI. A MUNICIPAL-SPONSORED COMMUNITY GARDEN: LOWELL

Started in 1977 by the Mayor, the Lowell Community Garden is an outstanding example of inter-departmental cooperation and responsibility on the part of a municipal government. The garden site is vacant Lowell Industrial Park land, and permission to use it was obtained from the City Manager and City Council. Many available local resources were identified and utilized to get the project rolling. The Lowell Department of Public Works installed faucet-type taps in the nearest fire hydrant to provide water. The Mass. Division of Agricultural Land Use provided start-up advice and information. The Middlesex County Engineers surveyed the area and staked-out the initial 20' X 20' garden plots. The Middlesex County Extension Service provided gardening phamplets and other gardening information. A member of the Parks Dept. plowed and harrowed the site with equipment borrowed from a nearby State Hospital. A CETA worker assigned to the community garden planted flower borders, did general maintenance, and added an educational component for the gardeners. Garden plots were advertised through local newspapers, gardeners, radio stations, and community centers, and plots are free to Lowell residents.

Two years later, the program sponsorship has been transferred to the City Managers office to insure stability and long-range continuation, and the project continues to be tremendously successful. The basic concept stressed behind the organization of the Lowell Community Gardens, is that a worthwhile program can be maintained for the public at minimum expense, by keeping open communication between all departments (city, county, and state) and by cooperation in utilizing each other's resources and expertise.

VII. A COOPERATIVE VENTURE

At the corner of Emily and Brookline Streets in Cambridge, in the midst of an industrial area, is one of the most unique community ventures in the city. Four years ago the Simplex Community Garden was established on a vacant lot as a collective operation. Instead of subdividing the 1600 square feet into tiny individual plots, ten to fourteen households pool their talents and labor every year in a joint effort and work the entire garden together.

The participants, who range in age from fifteen to sixty, divide the work, schedule the watering, and use equipment from a communal toolbox. One day each weekend is scheduled for all to share the heaviest tasks and maintenance. A bulletin board facilitates communications between members, and meetings that are held four or five times a year become forums for decision-making and idea-sharing. A cookout is held at the end of every summer, and the entire neighborhood is invited to share in the season's harvest.

VIII. THE INNER CITY GARDEN

Residents of urban neighborhoods stand to benefit the most from community gardening activities. Many Massachusetts inner-city areas are characterized by closely situated multiple-family houses or apartments, a scarcity of open green space, and acres of rubble-strewn vacant lots (created by the bulldozing of burned or neglected buildings and/or urban redevelopment efforts). For all urban dwellers, gardens can provide a low-cost source of wholesome vegetables and a focus for neighborhood recreational activities, while helping to "green the city".

The very neighborhoods that may want or need community gardens the most often face the most obstacles to garden start up. Resources are few, topsoil usually lacking or contaminated with lead, and the beaurocratic red tape when dealing with city government can be discouraging. Many Boston neighborhood groups have managed to overcome some of these obstacles and there are now some 60 gardens in Boston and the number is growing yearly. Some are "rubble" gardens and are a real tribute to the creativity and determination of inspired neighborhood leaders.

Be sure to have soil tested for lead before starting a community garden in an urban area. For more information about the problem of lead in city garden soils, contact Suffolk County Extension Service or Boston Urban Gardeners.

SOUTH END GARDEN PROJECT, BOSTON (1977)

Just over a year ago, the first load of MDC-donated topsoil was trucked into the South End by the National Guard. The South End Garden Project was then a small group of people who hardly knew one another but who, with the strong support of a local State Rep., permission and assistance from the BRA, and tools from United South End Settlements, had managed to organize the first earth moving operation last June. Suddenly, a rubble and garbage-strewn vacant lot on the cor-

ner of Lenox and Tremont streets was transformed into a hilly landscape of fertile soil with about twenty community people working to spread the soil for our first garden.

This year, the Garden Project represents more than two hundred gardeners and their families on ten gardens throughout the South End and Lower Roxbury. The co-founder of the project is on full salary, and three other people are paid as part-time workers with funds solicited by Ox-Fam America from two private foundations. Fifteen community people are paid a small amount as "volunteer" Commonwealth Service Corps workers; and the Garden Project is supervising six U.S.E.S. Neighborhood Youth Corps Workers this summer.

Each garden has its own neighborhood coordinator who handles day-to-day decisions, allots the garden parcels, and plans future improvements. The success of the South End Garden Project owes a great deal to the efforts of these garden coordinators.

This year as always, we have had to improvise and experiment. At the W. Dedham St. garden (a 40' by 60' lot), we dropped five cubic yards of MDC soil and 10 cubic yards of composted leaves from Wellesley--not nearly enough for the lot. However, aided by the senior citizens, we pick-axed and removed as much rubble as possible, and mixed layers of compost and soil over the loosened ground. Now, 16 elderly people from Unity Towers and four local families are growing food there.

After completion of the garden on Harrison St. and Plympton, the staff will begin landscaping all the garden sites as well as unused spaces throughout the community. We will also search the city for sources of organic materials to compost so that we can begin to make our own soil.

Over the past year, the garden organizers have learned through experience to trust the instincts of people in each neighborhood when deciding how to organize and develop each garden site. As a result, each garden looks different and fits the needs of the neighborhood it serves. Neighborhood people want to do what they can to help create the gardens, and the task of the organizers is largely one of identifying resources and finding ways to utilize the talents and time of people to get the job done. We should all be pleased with ourselves at the amount of work we have managed to do in one year. Think how the South End could be in five years!

(Excerpt from B.U.G. Newsletter)

I. EXAMPLES OF PERMISSIONS FOR USE OF GARDEN SITE

This example from Mass. Electric Company gardening program, "Grow a Garden On Us."

HOME GARDEN PERMIT

Date _____

Permission is hereby given to _____, of _____, whose telephone number is _____ (herein called the Licensee, which term shall include immediate family) to use as a home type garden that portion of the land in _____, Massachusetts, hereinafter described, owned by _____, a Massachusetts corporation (herein called the Licensor) upon the following agreements, terms and conditions:

1. This permission shall commence on the date of this license and shall expire on October 1, 1978, unless sooner terminated by the Licensor.

2. This permission is given to the stated Licensee and is neither transferable nor assignable.

3. The plot assigned to the Licensee under this permit is Number _____

4. This permission is given in connection with the Licensor's so-called Home Garden Project and it shall be exercised strictly in accordance with the instructions, rules and regulations which may at any time be promulgated in connection therewith.

5. The Licensee shall indemnify and save harmless the Licensor from all loss, cost, damage and liability, of any kind or nature, arising from or in any way attributable to this permission and hereby releases and forever discharges the Licensor from any and all claims or demands for injury to persons and damage to property while on said land.

6. The Licensee's use of said land shall at all times be subservient to the rights of the Licensor to use the same in any manner whatsoever in connection with its present or future operations.

7. The Licensor may revoke this permit at any time without prior notice to the Licensee in case of violation of any of the foregoing agreements, terms and conditions.

I hereby accept said permission and agree to abide with the foregoing agreements, terms and conditions. I have read and agree to abide by the rules printed on the back of the "Grow A Garden on Us" folder.

_____
(Company)

By_____
(Agent)

_____

I. EXAMPLES OF PERMISSIONS, (CONT.)

This example from Quincy Community Garden

COMMUNITY GARDENING AGREEMENT

Land Owner: Old Colony Crushed Stone & Construction Co., Inc.
26 Vernon Street
Quincy, Ma. 02169

Contact Person: Roger Mc Donald

Location of Land: end of Liberty Street

Community Garden Group: South Quincy Community Garden

Garden Co-ordinator: Russ Costa
131 Liberty Street
Quincy, Ma. 02169

Duration of Agreement: May 15, 1978 through October 30, 1978

I, Henry Russell Costa, on behalf of myself and the South Quincy Community Garden, hereby indemnify and save harmless the Old Colony Crushed Stone & Construction Co., Inc. and all of its offices, agents, and employees against suit suits and claims of liability of each name and nature arising out of, or in consequence of, the use of land on Liberty Street for community gardening purposes.

Garden Co-ordinator: _____

Date: _____

Witness or notary: _____

Date: _____

On behalf of Old Colony Crushed Stone & Construction Co., Inc.:

Signed by: _____

Date: _____

II. SAMPLE LIABILITY RELEASES

TOWN/CITY OF _____

RELEASE

I _____ of _____
Massachusetts for good and valuable consideration given to me by the Town/City of _____, specifically the use of City-owned land for a garden plot during the summer of 19__ located at _____
_____
the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, do hereby release and discharge the Town/City of _____ from any and all claims, demands, actions and causes of action of every name and nature which I now have or might have upon or against said Town/City of _____, its agents, servants or employees, and especially from all claims arising out of any and all personal injuries, damages, expenses, and any loss or damage whatsoever resulting or to result from the Town/City's allowing me the use of said property for gardening purposes. It is also understood and agreed that I will hold harmless the Town/City of _____ from all claims, demands and suits for damages, costs, loss of services, expenses, or compensation which I, my heirs, next of kin, executors, administrators, successors, assigns have or may have on account of or in any way growing out of said use of Town/City property for gardening purposes or its results by the Town/City of _____ or its agents, servants, or employees.

I further understand that this release is to compromise and terminate all claims for injuries or damages of whatever nature, known or unknown, including any damages known or unknown to the fruits, vegetables, or flowers which I have planted.

Signed_____

Date----------

II. SAMPLE LIABILITY RELEASES (CONT.).

I hereby release the City of Woburn, the Conservation Commission, and the Woburn Community Garden Association from any liabilities associated with my activities on land owned by the City of Woburn for conservation purposes.

I hereby state that I have read and agree to adhere to the rules and regulations of the Woburn Community Garden Association.

Signed: _____

_____

Date: _____

I (we) hereby idemnify and save harmless the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Department of Food and Agriculture, _____, _____ and all of its offices, agents and employees against suits and claims of liability of each name and nature arising out of, or in consequence of, the use of land at _____ for community gardening purposes.

Garden Coordinator(s): _____

_____

Date: _____

Witness or Notary: _____

Date: _____

III. SAMPLE GARDENER APPLICATION FORMS

MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT of FOOD and AGRICULTURE
Massachusetts grown...and fresher!
100 CAMBRIDGE STREET, BOSTON, MA 02202 Phone: 617-727-3000
Frederic Winthrop, Jr. Commissioner

COMMUNITY GARDEN APPLICATION FOR STATE LAND

AT _____

Application for garden plot, summer of 19__.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

(City) _____ (Zip) _____

PHONE NO. _____

Number of people in family or household _____

Have you had gardening experience? _____

Contribution enclosed for materials or maintenance _____

I/we have read Rules for Community Gardeners on State Land, understand them, and agree to abide by them. I/we realize that failure to abide by these rules will result in loss of gardening privileges. Furthermore, I/we understand that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, _____, and all its employees and agents cannot be held liable for accidents or damages to person, property or plants that might occur relative to gardening activities at _____.

Signed _____

Date _____

Return this application to your garden coordinator.

(do not write below this line)

Application no. _____ Plot Assignment: Section _____

Size of garden _____ Plot no. _____

III SAMPLE GARDENER APPLICATION FORMS (CONT.)

Example from Woburn Community Garden program

WOBURN COMMUNITY GARDENS

APPLICATION

NAME:_____

ADDRESS:_____

TELEPHONE NO:_____

HAVE YOU HAD ANY GARDENING EXPERIENCE?_____

IF YES, WHAT KIND?_____

(Inexperienced gardeners are welcome)

Can you devote a minimum of 5 hours a week to your garden?_____

Would you attend a workshop on gardening procedures if one were arranged?_____

Would you attend a workshop on food storage and preservation?_____

Do you agree to release the City of Woburn, the Conservation Commission and the Woburn Community Gardens from any liabilities associated with your activities on land owned by the City of Woburn?_____

Do you agree to adhere to the rules and regulations which have been adopted by the Woburn Community Gardens?_____

Applicant's Signature_____

Accepted: Date_____ By_____
Authorized Signature

REGISTRATION #_____ PLOT #_____

Accepted for Plot #_____ in Woburn Community Gardens for the year 1978 by_____
Authorized Signature
Woburn Conservation Commission

IV. SAMPLE RULES AND REGULATIONS

(excerpts from G.L. Ch.20 regs.)

MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT of FOOD and AGRICULTURE
Massachusetts grown...and fresher!
100 CAMBRIDGE STREET, BOSTON, MA 02202 Phone: 617-727 3000
Frederic Winthrop, Jr., Commissioner

May 10, 1978

RULES FOR COMMUNITY GARDENERS ON STATE LAND

Garden plots and adjoining aisles must be kept neat and free from mature weeds and overgrowth.

Priority in the allotment of state land garden plots is given to low-income elderly, low-income families and youth ages seven to sixteen. (with adult supervision).

Horticultural uses only are permitted, and food production is encouraged over other forms of gardening.

No permanent fixtures can be installed on any plot.

If gardening activity has not started in your assigned garden plot by June 1, it will be given to someone else.

Liability: The Commonwealth of Massachusetts including the state institution where the gardens are located, and all its employees and agents cannot be held liable for accidents or damages to person, property or plants that might occur relative to gardening activities on state land.

Use of herbicides (weed-killers) in any form is not permitted on state land. Use only those pesticides that are registered for home vegetable garden use (insecticides, fungicides, bug-sprays and powders). Use them sparingly and on wind-free days when they will not blow into the neighboring garden plots.

No drug producing or illegal plants can be grown.

Produce grown on state land cannot be sold.

Fall clean-up is the responsibility of each gardener. The land must be left in at least as good a condition as it was at the beginning of the season.

No fee shall be charged for use of a garden plot; however, gardeners may want to assess themselves for materials or services (water, plowing).

For answers to specific questions about plants, gardening advice, and gardening information, use the local resources. Ask your garden co-ordinator, the other community gardeners (some are quite experienced) or the County Extension Service (home garden publications).

Check with your volunteer community garden co-ordinator for any other rules about hours, parking, water, costs, etc.

V. SOIL TESTING REFERENCE SHEET

To have soil tested for any of the following: pH (acidity), nutrients (N-P-K), humus content, soluble salts (if a problem is suspected), contact:

EASTERN MASSACHUSETTS

Send or bring soil sample to:
Suburban Experiment Station
240 Beaver Street, Waltham 02154
891-0650

Identify sample with name and address, what you plan to grow, and which tests you want done.

WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

Send or bring a soil sample to:
Feed, Seed, Fertilizer Laboratory
West Experiment Station
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Ma. 01003
545-2311

Identify sample with name and address, what you plan to grow, and which tests you want done.

OTHER OPTIONS

Contact the local County Extension Service. Some garden centers do pH tests as a customer service. Home gardening soil test kits are sold at most garden supply stores.

LEAD TEST ONLY

This testing service is available to city gardeners with gardens located near lead-painted buildings or on vacant lots where buildings once stood. For sampling instructions and information, contact:

Suffolk County Extension Service
U. Mass. Downtown Center
Boston, Ma. 02125
482-9258

VI. MORE FUND-RAISING INFO.

WHERE TO GET FUND-RAISING INFORMATION IN GREATER BOSTON

The Associated Foundation of Greater Boston, Inc.
294 Washington Street, Suite 501
Boston, MA 02108
426-2608

Hours: M-F 9-5;
Closed Thurs. 12-2;
Open one evening till 8

Information on all foundations in Massachusetts and many national foundations. Basic directories of public funding. Technical assistance materials, including program management and financial systems. Call for appointment to attend preliminary orientation session.

Division of Public Charities
Office of the Attorney General
One Ashburton Place
Boston, MA 02108
727-2235

Hours: M-F 9-5

Current financial and organizational information on all charitable organizations, including trusts and foundations, operating in Massachusetts. Publishes Directory of Foundations in Massachusetts, available for purchase at $7.50 per copy from:

University of Massachusetts Press
P.O. Box 429
Amherst, MA 01002

Boston Public Library
Copley Square
Boston, MA 02117
536-5400

Hours: M-F 9-5;
Sat. 9-6

Humanities Reference: ext. 267
Foundation information.
Microtexts: ext. 274
Tax returns of all New England foundations.
Social Sciences Reference: ext. 278
Information on scholarships, fellowships, and loans to individuals.
Government Documents: ext. 295
All publications from the Superintendent of Documents of the U.S. Government Printing Office, and many state and city publications.

(cont.)

Kirstein Business Library
Boston Public Library
20 City Hall Avenue
Boston, MA 02108
523-0860

Hours: M-F 9-5

Reference volumes on corporations and individuals. Annual reports of major U. S. corporations. Information on federal funding.

Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Grants Library -- 2nd floor
44 School Street
Boston, MA 02108
523-2454

Hours: M-F 9-5

Information on federal grant programs, including sample federal proposals. Listings of state aid and technical assistance materials available.

Federal Regional Council of New England
Room E-431
John.F. Kennedy Building
Boston, MA 02203
223-6646

Hours: M-F 9-5

Representative of nearly all major federal grant programs. Maintains "Hotline" telephone service on any aspect of member agencies' grants programs. Fifteen member agencies include HEW, HUD, LEAA, CSA, and DOL.

ADDRESSES OF AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Federal Agencies:

Community Services Administration (CSA)
Regional Office
JFK Building, Boston
223-4080
(Community Food & Nutrition Program)

U. S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development (HUD)
Boston Area Office
15 New Chardon Street, Boston
223-4100
(Community Development Block Grants, Urban Development Action Grants)

State Agencies:

Division of Agricultural Land Use
Mass. Dept. of Food & Agriculture
100 Cambridge Street, Boston 02202
727-6632
(Community garden start-up info., farmers' markets info., community gardens list)

Mass. Dept. of Community Affairs
Division of Social & Economic Opportunity
10 Tremont Street, Boston 02108
Food Resources Coordinator, 727-2222
(Community Food & Nutrition Program, Farmers' Markets, Coops, community greenhouses)

Citizens For Participation, 727-4075
(Commonwealth Service Corps.)

Office of Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge St., Boston 02202
Div. Conservation Services, 727-1552
(Mass. Self Help Program)
Div. of Forest & Parks, 727-3178
(Youth Conservation Corps, Young Adult Conservation Corp.)

Dept. of Manpower Development
State Manpower Services Council
Hurley Bldg., Boston, 727-1916
(CETA information, booklet "CETA: Opportunities in Food & Agriculture")

County Offices:

GREENSTOCK Urban Gardening Program
Suffolk County Extension Service
100 Arlington St., Boston 02125
482-9258

BARNSTABLE COUNTY — Telephone: (617) 362-2511
Deeds and Probate Building, Barnstable 02630
BERKSHIRE COUNTY — Telephone: (413) 448-8285
46 Summer Street, Pittsfield 01201
BRISTOL COUNTY — Telephone: (617) 669-6744
135 Center Street, Segreganset 02773
DUKES COUNTY — Telephone: (617) 693-0694
Oak Bluffs 02557
ESSEX COUNTY — Telephone: (617) 774-0050
562 Maple Street, Hathorne 01937
FRANKLIN COUNTY — Telephone: (413) 774-2902
Court House, Greenfield 01301
HAMPDEN COUNTY — Telephone: (413) 736-7204
1499 Memorial Avenue, W. Springfield 01089
HAMPSHIRE COUNTY — Telephone: (413) 584-2556
33 King Street, Northampton 01060
MIDDLESEX COUNTY — Telephone: (617) 369-4845
105 Everett Street, Concord 01742
NORFOLK COUNTY — Telephone: (617) 668-0268
460 Main Street, Walpole 02081
PLYMOUTH COUNTY — Telephone: (617) 293-3541
High Street, Hanson 02341
SUFFOLK COUNTY — Telephone: (617) 482-0395
University of Massachusetts Downtown Center
100 Arlington Street, Boston 02125
WORCESTER COUNTY — Telephone: (617) 753-5477
36 Harvard Street, Worcester 01608

Other Organizations:

Associated Foundations of
Greater Boston
294 Washington St., Boston 02108
426-2608 (see P. 37)

Boston Urban Gardeners
67 Hereford St., Boston
267-4825
(Newsletter, community gardening info.
land trusts, slide show)

Gardens For All
Box 371
Shelburne, Vt. 05482
802-985-2565
(National community gardening organization, publications, newsletter)

Mass. Assn. Biological Farmers
and Gardeners (MABFG)
Box 575, Northampton, Ma. 01060
(Organic gardening info.)

Mass. Horticultural Society
300 Mass. Ave.
Boston, Ma. 536-9280
(Library, school programs, gardening info.)

VIII NEWSLETERS

The Source: the Newsletter of
the Massachusetts Association
of Biological Farmers and
Gardeners (MABFG)
Box 575
Northampton, Mass. 01060

Greenflash: the Newsletter of
Greenstock
Suffolk County Extension Service
UMass Downtown Center
100 Arlington St.
Boston, Mass. 02125

BUG: the Boston Urban Gardeners
Newsletter
66 Hereford St.
Boston, Mass. 02115

New Roots: Information Sharing
appropriate technologies in the
Northeast
P.O. Box 548
Greenfield, Mass. 01301

Massachusetts Farmers Bulletin
286 Old Lancaster Road
Sudbury, Mass. 01776

FEEDBACK ON "ORGANIZING A COMMUNITY GARDEN"

I. Which sections are most helpful and informative? Or which do you like best and why?

II. What kind of information is NOT included that would be helpful, i.e. what does this booklet lack?

III. Error corrections: list any specific errors or examples of inaccurate info. (with page numbers)

IV. Additional comments, suggestions, criticisms:

VI. Who are you? (optional) Name, address and how you are involved with community gardening?

Please return to:
Division of Agricultural Land Use
Mass. Dept. of Food & Agriculture
100 Cambridge Street,
Boston, Ma. 02202

Massachusetts
grown... and fresher!